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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2362
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1592
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2695
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000870

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, PRM, DRL; NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [ID](#) [BM](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR RECOMMENDS REFUGEE PROTECTION FOR ROHINGYAS;
MORE ON SRI LANKANS

REF: A. JAKARTA 858

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 629

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan; it also contains an Action Request -- please see para 7.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: UNHCR has submitted its recommendations to the GOI on the nearly 400 Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants staying in two camps in Aceh Province, Indonesia. Rohingyas comprise 269 of the migrants and UNHCR recommends them for refugee protection status and resettlement in a community setting in Indonesia. The remaining 119 are Bangladeshis and are recommended for repatriation. UNHCR was to meet with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Deplu) on May 19 to discuss these recommendations, as well as access to the 55 Sri Lankans who recently landed in Aceh. END SUMMARY.

UNHCR MAKES DETERMINATIONS

[1](#)3. (C) UNHCR has determined that 269 of the nearly 400 migrants who landed in Aceh in January and February 2009 are Rohingyas who came to Indonesia either directly from Burma or via Bangladesh (ref B). UNHCR has determined that they would face persecution if they are returned to Burma. UNHCR intends to grant them refugee status, Francis Teoh, UNHCR Head of Protection, told Labatt. A few of the Rohingyas are claiming resident status in Bangladesh and asked to be returned to that country. UNHCR and the GOI will need to work with the Bangladeshi Embassy to confirm their claims.

RESETTLING THE ROHINGYAS

[1](#)4. (C) Efforts are under way to improve the migrants' situation. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is now caring for the migrants in camps located at the Sabang island navy base and in Idirayeuk village, is recommending that the Rohingyas from the two camps be moved to a community setting in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, according to IOM Indonesia's Steve Hamilton. Teoh said UNHCR concurs that they be moved as quickly as possible as the two temporary camps are cramped and do not allow freedom of movement, particularly the crowded Idirayeuk tent housing which is located in the backyard of the subdistrict chief's office.

[1](#)5. (C) Hamilton told Labatt that although the impoverished Idirayeuk villagers have been hospitable, the migrants will eventually wear out their welcome. They need to be moved to a larger community where they can be better assimilated. IOM recommended to the GOI that all the Rohingyas be housed in

guesthouses in Medan and not be confined, Hamilton said. While they would not be allowed to work, they could likely make a small living through handicrafts and trade. The Muslim Rohingyas have learned some Indonesian language during their months in Indonesia and culturally fit in well in Indonesian society.

¶6. (C) UNHCR confirmed that 119 of the migrants are Bangladeshis and therefore do not qualify for refugee protection. The GOI has provided the list of Bangladeshis to the Bangladeshi Embassy and will need to work with it to confirm citizenship and repatriation plans, Teoh said. They would likely be held at an immigration detention camp pending their repatriation.

ACTION REQUEST

¶7. (C) IOM is currently using USD 236,000 in Australian funding to care for the Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants, but most of this money will be used to repatriate the Bangladeshis, Hamilton said. IOM will soon need the USD 280,000 requested from PRM, as it has no other sources of funding at this time. Mission requests that PRM advise on the status of this request. END ACTION REQUEST.

MORE ON SRI LANKANS

¶8. (C) UNHCR was also planning to meet with Deplu regarding the 55 Sri Lankans who recently washed up in Aceh (see ref A), Teoh confirmed. UNHCR hopes to get immediate access to the Sri Lankans, who have already been given an initial

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screening by IOM. Since the Sri Lankans are apparently all Tamil males, they will automatically be subject to "exclusionary" interviews in addition to refugee screening, to determine whether they are in any way connected to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization. (Note: The GOI has secured the migrants as they are reviewed for possible LTTE connections. The Sri Lankan Embassy is in touch with the GOI regarding the group and wants to be involved in determining their identities and status.)
HUME